

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 25, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2801 Nebraska Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken:

The U.S. has long been an open and welcoming refuge to those fleeing persecution. As you are aware, the Biden-Harris administration announced plans to fully withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan this fall. Throughout the course of the United States' time there, we have worked alongside Afghan civilians in their efforts as interpreters, engineers, security guards, cultural advisors, and more. These Afghan civilians were critical to the United States' mission in Afghanistan and must be included in our evacuation plan.

For this reason, we request that you immediately begin the process of reviewing the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Program to ensure that it has the necessary resources to operate effectively. We learned from SIV recipients and service providers of some unnecessary delays in processing these applications. Immediately processing all pending applications should be a top priority for the Department of Homeland Security. This would provide an evacuation plan to some 17,000 Afghan civilians and their families who worked alongside our troops.

In addition to processing, we learned from service providers that there is a need to provide financial assistance to SIV recipients, so that they can immediately purchase flights out of Afghanistan or accommodate travel. By granting SIV status, the United States acknowledges that the recipients and their families are in danger. When refugees travel to the U.S. or U.S. citizens are stranded abroad, their flights are typically purchased with loans. Therefore, we ask

that SIV recipients be given access to financial services to promptly ensure their safe evacuation from the country. The time spent waiting to obtain funds to purchase flight tickets or other means of travel can prove deadly, and the United States should not risk the security of these civilians for financial reasons, who have been invaluable to the United States' mission in Afghanistan.

The United States has a proud tradition of standing with our allies. Afghan nationals who worked alongside U.S. troops did so knowing that they and their families would be at risk. As the Biden-Harris administration works to withdraw our brave servicemembers from Afghanistan, we must not forget about those who stood with them in their efforts.

We are grateful for your leadership on this issue, and we welcome the opportunity to work more with you on this matter.

Sincerely,



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress

Additional Signatories:

Rep. Tom McClintock
Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman
Rep. Scott Peters
Rep. Jan Schakowsky
Rep. Thomas R. Suozzi
Rep. Joe Neguse
Rep. Dina Titus
Rep. Rick Larsen
Rep. Val Demings
Rep. Ed Case
Rep. James P. McGovern

Rep. Ro Khanna
Rep. Elaine Luria
Rep. Mondaire Jones
Rep. Diana DeGette
Rep. Sharice L. Davids
Rep. Eleanor Homes Norton
Rep. Joaquin Castro
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, II
Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr
Rep. David N. Cicilline
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly
Rep. Brian Mast
Rep. Conor Lamb
Rep. Julia Brownley
Rep. Michael Waltz
Rep. Don Young
Rep. Colin Allred
Rep. Austin Scott
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Rep. Danny K. Davis
Rep. Pramila Jayapal
Rep. Jamaal Bowman
Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr
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Rep. Susan Wild
Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee
Rep. Mike Quigley

Rep. Madeleine Dean
Rep. Mike Doyle
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Rep. Frederica S. Wilson
Rep. Jahana Hayes
Rep. David E. Price
Rep. Jamie Raskin
Rep. Mark Pocan
Rep. Suzan DelBene
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Rep. Peter Welch
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Rep. Betty McCollum
Rep. Veronica Escobar
Rep. Jesús G. "Chuy" García

Rep. Chellie Pingree

Rep. Barbara Lee

Rep. Elise Stefanik